

Bridal show set to raise funds and awareness for Kidney Foundation and donor programs



By Brock Weir

Over 30 years ago, Kiersten Brooks' uncle went into kidney failure, saved with a donation from her father. Her father gave the gift of life, but a few years ago, he too was in dire need of a new kidney and found a match with his wife.

Now that he's on the road to recovery, their 23-year-old daughter is going all-out to raise awareness of the Kidney Foundation and the importance of signing a donor card by doing what she loves best.

Ms. Brooks, a soon-to-be-resident of Aurora, is a hair stylist and makeup artist at Aurora's Yellow Orange Salon, located on Yonge Street at Church. The Parisian-themed salon holds twice yearly fashion shows to raise funds for various community organizations and when salon owner Jeffery Barkley tasked her with organizing the spring/summer show, she knew just where to start.

"The organization is very near and dear to my heart," she says. "Jeff stuck me in charge with it saying, 'Good luck, have fun.' There has been a little bit of stress, but I am managing it quite well and enjoying it. I get to look for all the models and all the people who are going to help organize it and it is all coming together nicely. I am excited about it because I feel this is something I should learn how to do. I like to try all different aspects of the fashion world."

These fashion shows began at the salon about 10 years ago, according to Mr. Barkley. When they first opened their doors in Aurora, he noticed there were always organizations and initiatives that needed help, whether it was the local hospital or the Yellow Brick House women's shelter.

"I made the commitment just to help where we could," he says of the evolution of the shows. "It progressed over the years and we decided it should be an every-six-month event. We found that it felt great to give back to the community and be able to put on a great show [while showing] Aurora and everyone what we're about and what we can do."

The duo decided this show, as it is now spring, will have a bridal theme. As soon as the warmer weather arrives, the salon goes into overdrive with bridal parties coming through to get new looks for the big day. Partnering with Aurora's Elmwood Bridal, models will not only be sporting wedding gowns and "evening elegance" on the runway, which will be laid out down the centre of the store, but also the talents boasted by their team of hair and makeup stylists.

"I have been working with Elmwood Brides since the 1990s doing world competitions," explains Mr. Barkley. "They were nice enough to allow me to take gowns over to Europe and the United States for bridal competitions and any time I needed gowns for shows, they are a great partner to have. They are always ready to jump in, ready to go, and it is really nice to have them as a

partner.?

While the event is a great excuse to help teach his team of upcoming trends for the spring and summer in terms of colour and cuts, not to mention extending these trends to their customers, realising the importance of benefiting the Kidney Foundation is a cause close to his heart as well.

?My father has had a [new] liver now for six years and without it he would have passed away years ago,? he says. ?I am appreciative of donors and technology and I think it is very important we bring that into focus as well. They need your donations, help, and support. You never know ? unfortunately, the next person might be you or me. And I also want the audience to see the talent of this team.?

Adds Ms. Brooks: ?And a night full of models, wine and raffles? There's a little something for everyone!?

Yellow Orange's Bridal Fashion Show in Support of the Kidney Foundation of Canada sashays down the catwalk on Friday, April 24 at 6 p.m. To book your ticket, call 905-726-8141, or email yelloworangesalon@gmail.com.